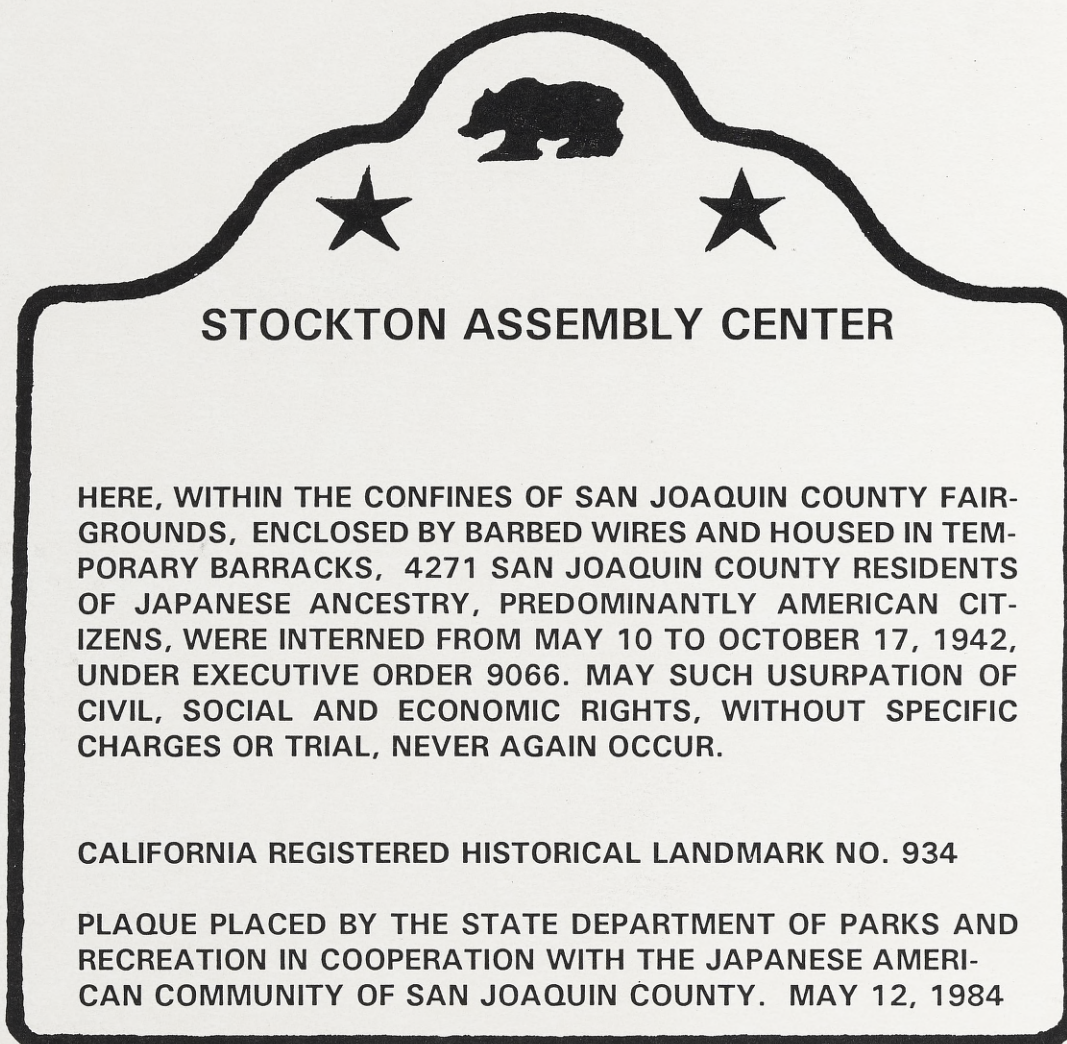




STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER

1942 - 1992
A 50 YEAR REUNION



STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER
California State Historical Monument
San Joaquin County Fairground

Cover

The historical monument was dedicated on June 2, 1984. The huge rock and garden was designed and installed under the direction of Masao "Duke" Yoshimura and Bob Ogino.

Photographs

Many of the photographs in this publication were contributed by Jack Gordon, former staff member of the Stockton Assembly Center.

Lil Pancho

Sketches were furnished by artist and former staff member of the El Joaquin, George Akimoto



STOCKTON
ASSEMBLY
CENTER

September 4, 1992

Dear Friends,

As cochairmen of the Stockton Assembly Center 50th Anniversary Reunion Committee, may we extend our warmest greetings to each of you.

Our registration reveals that a tremendous interest has been shown by all of you, since many of you have travelled long distances from out of state and even Japan to join your relatives and friends here. Thank you for your heart-warming response.

The planning of this Reunion started in April of 1991. Since then, numerous individuals have met monthly, participating in the various committees, to ensure the success of this event. We are sincerely grateful for their diligent efforts.

Our appreciation also goes to the Stockton and Lodi JACL Chapters for their prime sponsorships of the Reunion and to the Stockton Buddhist Temple for its cooperation and use of its facilities. We are grateful for the moral and material support provided us by the Calvary Presbyterian Church and by numerous individual and group sponsors. Many of you will be meeting friends for the first time in almost fifty years. We hope that this will be a most memorable event for all of you.

Sincerely yours,

*Barry Saiki
Dick Fujii
Kinji Hiramoto
Frank Sasaki*

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STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER

1942-1992
A 50 Year Reunion

Friday, September 4, 1992

5:00 - 9:00 pm Registration
Get Acquainted Social

Saturday, September 5, 1992

8:00 am	Registration	Stockton Buddhist Temple
10:30 am	Continental Breakfast	
11:00 am	50th Year Observance	San Joaquin County Fairgrounds
	Golf	Manteca Municipal Golf Course
12:00 noon	Free Afternoon	
1:00 pm	Visit to Haggin Museum (Optional)	
5:00 pm	Hosted Cocktails	Stockton Buddhist Temple
6:00 pm	Welcome Banquet and Entertainment	

Sunday, September 6, 1992

10:00 am	Free Morning Church Service	Stockton Buddhist Temple
12:30 pm	Luncheon	Calvary Presbyterian Church
	Free Afternoon	Stockton Buddhist Temple
4:30 pm	Hosted Cocktails	
5:00 pm	Sayonara Banquet	Stockton Buddhist Temple
9:00 pm	Sayonara Ball	
	Dance to the music of the Swingtones	

Monday, September 7, 1992

Optional Tour	Lake Tahoe Casino Trip
---------------	------------------------

Local transportation is available upon request

Stockton Assembly Center 50th Year Reunion

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"We were the wards of our government, each limited to two suitcases of possessions and destined to spend five months of waiting..."

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY REUNION OF THE STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER

IN RETROSPECTION

By Barry Saiki

The Golden Anniversary or the fiftieth year of any memorial event is eagerly planned and elegantly staged with special pride and great satisfaction. However, on this occasion, we are turning our clocks back to a catastrophic event, which uprooted more than 4200 people from our settled homes, active businesses and productive farms and enclosed us behind barbed wire fences, divested of our basic human rights, purportedly due to the exigency of a war, not of our making or of our fault.

When the printing of the souvenir booklet was discussed at one of the earlier Reunion Committee meetings, the initial question was, "What should the contents be?" in addition to the welcome messages, the programmed activities, list of homecoming participants, the ads of the sponsoring companies and individuals and the credits to the organizing staff.

Without some form of text, the booklet would be barren. It would be just a structural framework of what, who, when and where but without the explanatory "why?"

One suggestion was that the contents should be brief and succinct, outlining an overview of what happened or what had transpired during the sultry five months in 1942 within the enclosures of the Stockton Assembly Center, which was earlier known to us affectionately as the San Joaquin County Fairgrounds. We could have announced that articles are being solicited for selection and inclusion in the booklet, because there are at least several thousand stories that could have been picked.

Everyone who entered the assembly center has his or her story, deeply personal, fearful and hurtful, anxious and forlorn. Everyone who went into the fairgrounds was a victim of an unjust and ill-conceived executive order (E.O. 9066), maligned by the press and the public alike, suspected of unproven and unfounded charges, uncertain of the immediate future and apprehensive of the possible adverse changes that the tomorrow may bring.

We were wards of our own government, each limited to two suitcases of possessions and destined to pass five months of waiting, wondering if reason and righteousness will ultimately prevail over prejudice, hysteria and irrational emotions.

Lack of time and the advantage of asking known writers were reasons why we took the initiative of asking two former staff members of the El Joaquin to contribute some of their impressions about the event fifty years ago.

Jim Doi and his wife, former Mary Yamashita, were both editors of the Center newspaper. For them, it may be said that the internment in Stockton and in Rohwer, Arkansas was at most a Godsend. There they met, shared mutual feelings and married each other. The same fortuitous and fortunate outcome could be said for Kay and Teri (Tsunekawa) Yamaguchi, Jim and Toshiko (Oga) Ouye and Bob and Irene (Baba) Takahashi. By pure coincidence, Mary, Terry, Toshiko and Bob all worked for the El Joaquin. Perhaps, the Greek Goddess of Love, Psyche (another coincidence), opened the way for their happy and successful

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marriages.

In the brief space allotted to him, Jim recalls his teenage impressions as he entered the Stockton Assembly Center, which was located just a quarter mile from his family farm in Race Track. After relocation, Jim pursued his goal of higher education and received his Masters and Ph.D at the reputable University of Chicago. He held increasingly important positions in Arizona and Michigan before becoming the Dean of Education at the University of Rochester in the 1970's. In 1979, he became the Dean of Education at the University of Washington. Although he retired two years ago, he still retains ties with the university as Emeritus Professor.

The other person who has contributed an article is Fred Oshima, formerly of Lodi, who served as the Sports Editor for both the Stockton Assembly Center El Joaquin and the Rohwer Outpost. Before the war, he was a staff correspondent for the San Francisco New World Sun and the Lodi Times. From McGehee, Arkansas he had relocated to the Midwest and had progressed in the field of food marketing. Before he returned to California to retire in Salinas five years ago, he became a department chief and opened a West Coast produce marketing office for Wetterau, a St. Louis company that ranks high among the Fortune "500."

Fred's input in toto was printed as we should recognize the achievements of prewar Nikkei sports as well as the role played by the Recreation Department in uplifting the morale within the Assembly Center.

The sports program played a vital role in dissipating the despondency and the vacuity of center life, and the sports pages brightened the day-by-day doldrums while delighting the entire center population, from participants to spectators.

George Akimoto, the Art Editor for the El Joaquin consented to our use of his "Lil Pancho" as the logo for the booklet and the souvenir mug. In an inimitable way, "Lil Pancho" reflected the ethos of the center, expressing through drawings, rather than words, the bon vivant and the vicissitudes of the center life. He also created the "Lil Dan'l" at the Rohwer Outpost.

The following paragraphs need to be written about the Reunion, since this could well be the last to be conceived on a large scale. We all know that the exclusion proclamation which placed us in the center in May, 1942 was just the beginning of our ordeal; for some, we faced several years, and for others, a long decade, of personal adjustments. Among these were whether to do seasonal work in Idaho or Montana, to apply for student relocation, to volunteer for Military Intelligence service, to serve in the Army, to go to Tule Lake as a "no-no," to relocate to the Midwest or the East, to go out on a temporary relocation, to wait out the war in order to move back to an unpredictable

California.

As we meet here in Stockton again fifty years later we come together from the various separate paths we had taken. In the early years of the relocation, on occasions, many of us fretted about our meager savings and counted our resources before making any commitments. Others, with widely separated families, encountered unimaginable crises which were met as best as could.

While this booklet cannot recount all of your stories, we hope that you will share them with your friends during the Reunion. Hopefully, much of the bitterness which we carry into the assembly center a half century ago has mellowed, and instead of anger and venom, we can talk to our fellow colleagues about the good that has blossomed, rather than the bad.

Whatever success or satisfaction we have attained are the products of our childhood environments, the parents who had guided us and the self efforts you have made. This homecoming is also the homecoming for the deceased, which include most of our parents, some of our family members and hundreds of our friends. They would be participating if they were still living. I believe that their spirits are among us, if not in substance, at least in our thoughts.

The personal struggles that all of you have undergone can only be related by each of you in your own words. Perhaps you can make your children understand the torments and the vagaries of our times. Yet, with intermarriages becoming the pattern for more than half of our third and fourth generations, we tend to become more complacent and less fearful. We think, if all goes well, that the evacuation and relocation will be a sordid trauma suffered by only our unfortunate generation.

This would be misleading. As a minimum, we need to remind our current and future generations of the dangers of bigotry and discrimination. We, who have experienced how hysterical emotions can sweep aside even our Constitutional rights, know how long it took for our government to make token restitution for the hardships we have endured. Our responsibilities as Americans is to keep alive the lessons of E.O. 9066 by being forever vigilant in protection of the rights of our fellow citizens.

Finally, I believe that no other ethnic group could have gone through the wholesale evacuation and relocation within the United States with as little trouble, and no other group could have reached our current level of achievements.

We should thank and pay our respect to the Issei immigrants, who taught us the values of work ethics, of education and of social harmony, as well as our sense of responsibilities to our society and community.

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"In the evenings, I would climb to the upper deck of the grandstand to catch the cooling breeze and look at the row upon row of tar papered shacks that stood where a year ago were flat grassy field that filled spaces within the race track."

"THAT SUMMER I GREW UP"

Jim Doi

I can still see the San Joaquin County Fairgrounds as it was in the years of the Great Depression. On three sides --east, west, and north-- the fairgrounds was bounded by a barbed wire topped, chain linked fence; and on the south, a long line of horse stalls separated it from the west, a road now called Airport Way.

As a boy growing up on a farm located less than a quarter mile from the Fairgrounds, I came to know best the east fence line and the south side, the horse stalls. The southeast corner of the fairgrounds was about a hundred feet from the back nine of the golf course; it was a good place to look for the dozens of golf balls that rolled into the heavy weeds along the horse stalls. Forever lost except to the sharp eyes of a small boy who even then marveled at the antics of the average weekend golfers.

Each August, just before the start of the San Joaquin County Fair, I would examine every foot of the chain linked fence on the east side for holes that would permit a small boy to slip into the fairgrounds, without having to pay the exorbitant entry fee at the gate. For a farm boy from Race Track, the County Fair was glamour, excitement, a festival of bright colored lights, music, the raucous chants of barkers, and the heady, tempting aroma of hamburger and assorted meats being broiled or grilled. It was the best week of the hot summer months.

So there I was again in the summer of 1942,

wandering past the horse stalls and looking at the barbed wire topped fence. Only this time, I was inside the fairgrounds. In the evenings, I would climb to the upper decks of the grandstand to catch the cooling breeze and look at the row upon row of tar papered shacks that stood where a year ago were flat grassy field that filled spaces within the race track. No bright colored lights, no ferris wheel, no carousel, no music bands, and the smell of cooking that came from messhalls was not always tempting. There were thousands of people in the fairgrounds, but unlike the thousands who thronged to the County Fair in summers past, these people were quiet and their eyes had the look of men and women burdened with great sadness. Only the children laughed.

I was in my last year as a teenager, still young but old enough to understand the sadness. Nothing that I had learned in school, or out of school, prepared me for life behind barbed wire fences patrolled by armed men. What happened should not have happened, not in America. Yet there I was, along with my school mates, neighbors, relatives and some 4300 others.

Escape in the sense of slipping through the fence and heading for the hills or the island would have been easy. I knew the area well. But there was no point to such an escape. The fairgrounds, Stockton Assembly Center in the summer of 1942, was not a real prison.

The real prison was America, the only country that

(continued on page 15)

ENJOY!

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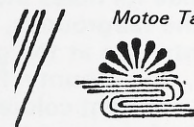


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Yamato Ground

Yamato Athletic Club was given recognition and inducted into the Stockton Hall of Fame in 1981. The 1925 Baseball Club shown here is one of several championship team fielded in those early years. Left to Right, kneeling; Johnny Akaba, Frank Mirikitani, Ted Shindo, Frank Ito, Nobu Matsumoto and Kenso Nushida. Top; Rogan Miyanishi, Unknown, Henry Usui, Unknown, Coach Komura, Jim Okino, Lefty Taniguchi, and George Suzuki.

SPORTS IN AND AROUND STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER

Fred K. Oshima

If ever the fascinating activity of sports was seriously challenged and dramatically rose to the occasion, it was within the confines of the San Joaquin County Fairgrounds.

It happened during the dark, ominous spring and summer of 1942 when an unprecedented human tragedy struck overnight and sports and its allied recreational activities were thrust into the limelight to act and serve as the most important psychological vehicle and as a diversionary measure for some 4200 displaced Japanese Americans.

As political victims of Pearl Harbor and World War II, an innocent group of San Joaquin County residents were indiscriminately rounded up and dumped into the infamous Stockton Assembly Center at the southeast corner of the city on Charter Way and US Highway 99. We were part of 120,000 evacuees swiftly swept up from the three Pacific Coast states. Our one and only crime, the unfavorable facial characteristic of our ancestors.

Highly recognized with the respected image of

being very industrious, reliable, hard working and law abiding, we suddenly found ourselves as tragic wards of the government, shafted royally by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066.

With time and threat of sedentary inactivity looming inside a makeshift, barbed wire community, a desperate need to quickly adjust and turn around the sagging morale became the order of the day. A quick fix to implement an instant program of sanity and sense of dignity became a very serious priority for the Assembly Center's administration.

Remarkably, the recreational program became the nervous bureaucrats' realistic solution for this emergency. Sports came to the rescue, met the crucial challenge and became the catalyst that kept and sustained the sensitive morale and integrity of the internees and at least made life somewhat tolerable inside the miserable assembly center.

In reflecting on what happened fifty years ago, given the fragile situation and the gloomy conditions of the time, the performance and results of the Stockton

Assembly Center's Recreation Department program from both participant and spectator standpoints, were amazing, most impressive and outstanding.

Through the fine leadership of Supervisor of Recreation, Jack W. McFarland, an aggregate total of over quarter million people participated in the "rec" program, in one form or another.

McFarland, the onetime popular sports editor of the Stockton Independent and a high school and college athletic official, successfully managed a hard working, enthusiastic departmental staff, headed by George "Pop" Suzuki and Keiichi Ogasawara.

Serving on the department staff as Block Recreation Coordinators were: *Block 1, Art Hisaka & Polly Baba; Block 2, Matsuo Okazaki; Block 3, Ted Oseto & Tomiko Sugimoto; Block 4, James Hamasaki & Louise Baba; Block 5, George Horita; Block 6, Kats Nagai & Grace Hagio; Block 7, Grayce Kaneda & Jiro Okinaga; Block 8, Kiyo Shimasaki; Block 9, Sumi Utsumi & Ed Kamita.*

When this ambitious project started on an organized scale, an average of 14,000 people weekly for nineteen weeks were involved, and brought the total participants and spectators for the various athletic, social and educational programs to an astounding figure of 266,000. Fans in attendance for events like sumo and softball, regularly attracted 2,000 to 3,000.

A very comprehensive program was put together and provided by the rec department. You name it...every conceivable pastime under the sun was developed and made available for the Issei, Nisei and Sanseis.

Twenty three activities and classes were efficiently programmed...football, softball, basketball, track and field, volleyball, horse-shoe, table tennis, boxing, sumo, judo, shogi, go, chess, cards, knitting & crocheting, wood carving, first aid, dances, croquet, badminton, singing, stage and movies. Lack of playing area precluded baseball.

Various competitive leagues, tournaments and exhibitions were staged to add natural spice and maintain a spirit of sportsmanship, cooperative interest and fun for all.

Of particular interest, to adequately supplement the federal government's meager operating budget, an additional sum of \$800 was raised through popular subscription by the camp's residents to buy various sports and recreational essentials needed to properly conduct the many activities.

A brief recap and highlights of the many events, appears in the Center's newspaper, EL JOAQUIN'S farewell edition... a reunion souvenir copy.

In narrating and recording this historic account about sports in the assembly center and the significant role it played to help maintain at least some semblance of normal civility in a crude commune, a "line or two" about some of the more prominent prewar Nisei athletes is briefly featured for this 50th Anniversary story.

ATHLETIC HEADLINERS

Within the center boundaries were assembled some of the premier Nikkei athletic headliners who made notable names for themselves before World War II and gave the camp aficionados a rare opportunity to watch, reminisce and take a hike down memory lane again.

San Joaquin County was a veritable spawning ground for outstanding super stars, particularly in baseball, football and basketball.

The star studded Stockton Yamatos ruled the state's Nikkei semipro baseball competition during the roaring twenties against such well known teams as the San Jose Asahis, Alameda Taiikus, Sacramento Nippons, Fresno All Stars, Guadalupe Packers and Los Angeles Nippons.

The great Yamatos' lineup of that era, featured stellar players like *Frank Mirikitani, Frank Ito, George Suzuki, Henry Usui, Lefty Taniguchi, Johnny Akaba* and nearby Lodi's prep phenom, *Nobi Matsumoto*. They strengthened their strong squad further by recruiting some of the best horsehidors from Hawaii; among them were *Rogan Miyanishi, Jim Okino, Ted Shindo* and the marvelous *Kenso Nushida*.

Nushida made a belated bid with the Sacramento Senators of the Pacific Coast League with his crafty pitching, the first Nisei to crash pro ball, but couldn't quite make the grade as his aging arm by then, was practically over the hill. However, it was a clever public relations stunt, an effort to draw Japanese American baseball enthusiasts through the turnstile.

During their prime, the Spud City nine captured the state title in 1925 and made a successful barnstorming trip to Japan in 1928.

Ironically, many of this group's old time luminaries, the very stuff that legends are made of, took part and thrilled the internment fans again as the celebrated Poop-Outs softball aggregation.

In spite of their aching limbs, the veteran Poop-Outs, the pride and joy of the Issei fans in particular, proved to be a worthy representative for the camp's titanic "World Series" and gave Coach George Horita's youthful Block 5 Reds a terrific run for their money, before finally succumbing in a hard fought series.

Familiar bigtime names like *Sam Funamura, Matsuo Okazaki, Elmer Tsunekawa, Fred Ito, Jim Okino, Nobi*

Matsumoto and Frank Mirikitani gave the spectators a much needed moment of excitement and brief respite from the worries of the "outside" world.



1940 California State Champion, Lodi Templars, left to right; standing, Coach Nobu Matsumoto, Shot Iwamura, Tom Ishida, Will Kagawa, Mas Okuhara, Keizo Okuhara and Matsuo Okazaki. Bottom; left to right, Kiichi Hiramoto, George Takeuchi, Johnny Hiramoto, Butch Hayashi, Sam Funamura, Red Tanaka and Shig Kaba. Missing; Kazuto "Phat" Ito.

LODI TEMPLARS

During the post-depression era of the late 30's and early 40's, the Lodi Templars carried on the rich tradition established by the Yamatos, as a dominant force in the California Nisei baseball picture.

The Tokay City team, along with the Pride of the Southland, San Pedro Skippers' were the top teams along the West Coast and were it not for December 7, a dynasty was in the making for ex-Yamatos' star, Coach Nobu Matsumoto's well oiled machine.

In the annual state tournament, they went head to head against the vaunted Skippers from Terminal Island, a semipro nine, loaded with some of the top prep and collegiate players in the Los Angeles area and in 1940 claimed the California State Championship.

The state titlist was a perennial contender in the fast Northern California Japanese Baseball League. Considered the strongest Nisei loop along the coast, the NCJBL included *Walnut Grove Deltans, Sebastopol Sakuras, Oakland Merrits, Alameda Taiikus, Stockton Yamatos, Mt. Eden Cardinals and San Jose Asahis.*

The Lodi lineup: *pitchers, Kazuto "Phat" Ito, Red Tanaka, Will Kagawa & Mas Okuhara; catcher, Hideo "Butch" Hayashi; infielders, Tom Ishida, The Hiramoto brothers, Johnny & Kiichi, George Takeuchi, Matsuo Okazaki; outfielders, Keizo Okuhara, Shig Kaba, Sam Funamura and Shot Iwamura.*

Slugging Shot Iwamura continued his power hitting in the service with some of the Army's pro-dominated teams.

CHEROKEE INDIANS

Of special interest in the local area was the colorful, young Cherokee Indians, a collection of schoolboy sensations that Coach George Horita developed during the mid-thirties into one of the best teenage teams in Northern California.

The talented Indians, a closely knit gang of kids, were basically built from players residing in the suburban Morada district between Stockton and Lodi, along Cherokee Lane (US Highway 99). Like a farm team, the Indians, whether by design or not, eventually became the nucleus for the strong Yamatos' organization... lock, stock and barrel.

Among the familiar names that graced this well disciplined outfit were the versatile *Kamibayashi brothers, Frank, Ted & Sam, Ben Masai, George Baba, Hide Sugimoto, Tom & George Matsuoka, Tak Horita, George Matsumoto, Freddie Masai and Frank Horita.*

Freddie Masai went on to be the diminutive darling of Oak Park for the renowned Stockton Karl Ross Post, a consistent national American Legion baseball powerhouse, as a flashy centerfielder.

However, the best player produced by the Indians, had to be Frank Horita, dubbed the Nisei Ted Williams of the time. Tall and lean, he was one of the finest first sackers in the state and carried the Yamatos with his wicked Louisville slugger. He won the 1940 NCJBL batting crown with an awesome .404 average.

Knowledgeable local baseball insiders say that Horita would have been an automatic star for the Karl Ross Legion team; however, he followed in the footsteps of illustrious Frank Mirikitani and the two were among the better players to ever don the famed Yamatos' uniform.

The American Legion baseball program served as a sound training ground for many Nisei aspirants. The Lodi Legion squad was sprinkled with the likes of *Johnny Hiramoto, Matsuo Okazaki, Shot Iwamura, Mas Okuhara and Sammie Ichiba* before the war.

In 1933, Lou Tsunekawa made the sports' headline with his sterling mound performance that carried the Stockton Legionnaires to the western finals in Topeka, Kansas. Still a very popular baseball fixture in Port City, Tsunekawa further distinguished his horsehide activities by lending his well known background and expertise to the Stockton Little League Baseball program for the past forty years.

One of the selected few local Nisei elected to the Stockton Hall of Fame (also Ted Ohashi and Frank Mirikitani) "Lovable Lou" is the consummate Little

League leader with the city's busy athletic project for the kids as a much admired coach and administrator.

Speaking about baseball, Mas Okuhara was honored as San Francisco Nichi Bei Times' Athlete of the Year, as the originator of the Annual California State Baseball Tournament for 1975 and for his active involvement with the national pastime.

QUINTESSENTIAL ATHLETE

The exciting sport of football introduced one of the greatest all around Nisei athletes in the country... the legendary Matsuo "Oki" Okazaki.

The quintessential athlete, "Oki" affectionately so called by his Hakujin admirers, rose to fame as the sensational fleetfooted Nipponese Will O' the Wisp by press writers for his dazzling open field running and led the undefeated and untied Lodi High School Flames to the 1931 Northern California AAA, CIF Championship.

Literally immortalized, the unassuming hero became the most respected and visible Nikkei in the traditional WASP Lodi society. "Oki" was a true celebrity.

His respectability and high esteem in a segregated climate are difficult to even imagine in this day and age of generous human spirits, in that the Lodi High Marching Band, 100 strong at that time, expressly crossed the invisible "barrier"... the Southern Pacific Railroad track, and dramatically serenaded in front of his Issei father's grocery store in Nihonmachi for the annual Little Big Game football with rival Stockton High Tarzans.

Talk about exceptional love and respect in a little white, whistle stop country town. Even the local first generation colony got into the proverbial act and became "footo-boru" crazy.

Okazaki didn't rest on his pigskin laurel. As a captain, he was the heart and soul of the triumphant Templars as a all-league infielder. He also shared his shortstop playing ability with the semipro Lodi Wine Guild and even more, he made his presence felt on the basketball court too.

Stockton and Lodi turned out a string of top notch gridiron players. Lou Tsunekawa of Legion fame performed double duty as a halfback for the Tarzans and College of the Pacific Tiger's immortal Coach Amos Alonzo Stagg. Stockton High notables also included running backs George Uyeda and Sanji Teranishi, along with guard, Kiichi Ogasawara, who went on to make the Stockton Junior College varsity as well.

The mighty Flames also had a host of beefy varsity linemen in George Kishida, Ed Fujitani, Kaz Fukumoto, George Furuoka and Ed Wakimoto. Southpaw quarterback George Kagawa turned out to be the original 49'ers "Steve Young" of that period.

BASKETBALL

In round ball sport, Stockton parlayed the first legitimate bigtime Nisei college basketball star in the US in lanky Ted Ohashi. The Tarzans' star went on to play first string ball for UC Golden Bears at Berkeley during the early 30's and was a standout for the swimming team too. Ohashi became a YMCA executive in St. Louis via the fairground detention center.

Following in Ohashi's role for Coach Pete Lentz's prep were Mas Hagio and Kiyo Shimasaki. Smooth shooting Shimasaki also cavorted for the Stockton JC quintet. For the Red & White Flames, George Takeuchi and Shot Iwamura made the starting five.

When it came to the best independent town basketball team, the fast Stockton Dukes were one of the better outfits in Northern California. They featured such stars as *Tad Akaba, the Shimakawa brothers, John and Jiro, Mits Sakai, George Miki and Dick Matsui.*

Of hoop notes, Takeo "Babe" Utsumi, well known Bay Area columnist and raconteur, was a member of the star studded San Francisco Mikados, perhaps the best Nisei cage team ever assembled before the war. The retired Polk Street master retail baker in the city was also the camp's Recreation Department secretary.



National Champion, Stockton Busy Bees; left to right, Grace Hagio, Helen Ishii, Aya Inamasu, Barbara Inamasu, Yuki Kato, Yoshiko Nakamura, Dorothy Fujimura, and Teri Tsunekama and Coach George "Pop" Suzuki

STOCKTON BUSY BEES

As for girl's basketball, two celebrated words say it all... "BUSY BEES."

Chances are that, if it were not for the war, Coach

George "Pop" Suzuki's incomparable Stockton Busy Bees would probably still be ruling the roost as America's best Nisei Girls team ever. Led by the peerless Inamasu sisters, Aya & Babs (latter was camp's basketball commissioner), the Beautiful Bees were like John Wooden's devastating UCLA Bruins. A well organized cohesive unit, Coach Suzuki's fair crew monopolized the game, methodically destroying their opponents from basket to basket.

The Bees were simply inspiring and their long string of victories were like taking a leisurely walk through the park on a sunny Sunday afternoon. With the *Inamasu sisters*, the national championship team members were *Dorothy Fujimura, Yuki Kato, Helen Ishii, Yoshiko Nakamori, Grace Hagio and Teri Tsunekawa*.

In track and field, Dick Hayashi performed for Stockton High and JC as well and was one of the few Niseis to participate at Fresno's famed West Coast Relay. A versatile star, Hayashi's best included 10.0 in the 100, 6' for his high jump and 23' in broad jump. Other Tarzans' cinder members were *Frank Kuga, Mas Hagio, Stanley Takehiro, Shig Fukuyama, George Inouye and Stanley Ichiki*.

Lodi's Reunion Cochairman, Kinji Hiramoto soared over 12 feet in pole vault, a respectable height for the time.

In the ring, Center's Boxing Commissioner Shig Takahashi from French Camp made the circuit as a Golden Glove fighter and also became active as a local pugilist promoter.

A STIRRING SPORTS SCENARIO

In retrospect, this was the stirring sports scenario, in and around San Joaquin County, that I remember as a wandering scribe. In spite of the tragic evacuation and its crushing setback, sports came to its timely rescue and made for some exciting times with countless memories that probably will never be equaled again.

Such was the golden age of Japanese American sports, a refreshing cultural asset during the first half of the turbulent twentieth century. It was a fascinating time, symbolized by great support and devotion from the Issei fans and their deep financial pockets.

In essence, as a proverbial cynic and Monday morning quarterback, all we really managed to gather were some interesting grist for the mill... gohan for the ocha-zuke and to put some of these views together in reportorial form. At the same time, we tried to act as a purveyor of wisdom, along with a little touch of imagination and journalistic humor for a very special and unique group of "Quiet Americans," the wonderful "shikata-ganai-gaman" generations.

This indeed, is the remarkable legacy of Issei, Nisei

and Sansei sports, which certainly deserves affirmation in celebrating the Golden Anniversary of the Stockton Assembly Center.

Publicized as the much admired "Model Minority," the onetime exiles from our concentration camps, short changed by our own government, have truly come back a long way. We have managed to survive the wrath of war and endured the pain of ugly racism by successfully fighting and bootstrapping our way back into the mainstream and its good life.

In reflection, that is what this glorious Labor Day celebration is all about. Time to thoughtfully reminisce, share and mutually enjoy this treasured, lifelong experience. You've earned it. *Have fun!*

JIM DOI

(continued from page 9)

I, like other Niseis, could think of as "my country." From this prison there was no escape.

Had I been older, more sophisticated and more knowledgeable about government and human affairs, I probably would have turned to anger, despair, perhaps even contemplated suicide. Some did. But I was protected by my ignorance, and I still find the teenager's capacity to shut out things that I did not want to hear or talk about. I believed, I hoped that sometime soon all this would change, and we would return to the life that we had known. I did not wish to think otherwise.

Saved from brooding and dark philosophizing, I directed my energies toward the search for new friends and new experiences. In so doing, I soon found myself on the staff of the EL JOAQUIN, as a fledgling reporter. Again I was lucky. The editor, Barry Saiki, kept the staff busy, occasionally too busy, but usually just busy enough to give each member of the staff a sense of purpose. In August when Editor Saiki asked if I would like to go to Rohwer, Arkansas, as a member of the volunteer advance crew and send back reports on what the place was like, what our people should prepare for, etc. I was ready for the assignment. Race Track, Stockton, the fairgrounds, I would put behind me and go forth in search of new worlds.

That summer I grew up.



Lil Pancho



STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER

PROGRAM

WELCOME BANQUET

Saturday, September 5, 1992

Master of Ceremonies - Mr Barry Saiki

OPENING REMARKS

Master of Ceremony

WELCOME MESSAGE

Mr. Dick Fujii
Reunion Cochairman

INVOCATION

Reverend Saburo Masada
Calvary Presbyterian Church

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Master of Ceremony

Dinner

REUNION SPEAKER

Grayce Kaneda Uyehara
Chairperson, National JACL Legacy Fund

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mrs. Ruby Dobana

CLOSING MEDITATION

Reverend David Matsumoto
Stockton Buddhist Temple

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CLOSING REMARKS

Master of Ceremony

* * * * *

ENTERTAINMENT

Master of Ceremony - Mr. Takeo "Babe" Utsumi

Odori

Mrs. Takako Ueda - Hanayagi Ryu
Miss June Okubo - Bando Ryu

Songs

Mrs. Grace Nagata Miss Ann Tanimoto Mr. Warren Nitta

Group Performances
Stockton Buddhist Fujinkai

Stockton Bukkyo Taiko
(under the direction of Rev. David Matsumoto)



STOCKTON
ASSEMBLY
CENTER

PROGRAM

SAYONARA BANQUET

Sunday, September 6, 1992

Master of Ceremonies - Mr. Kinji Hiramoto

OPENING REMARKS

Master of Ceremony

MOMENT OF SILENCE

MEDITATION

Reverend Masanori Ohata
Stockton Buddhist Temple

Dinner

PRESENTATION - *Golf Awards*

Mr. Ed Yoshikawa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mr. Frank Sasaki
Reunion Cochairman

BENEDICTION

Reverend Saburo Masada
Calvary Presbyterian Church

CLOSING REMARKS

Master of Ceremony

* * * * *

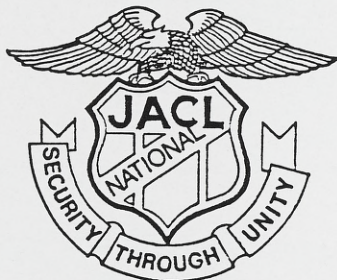
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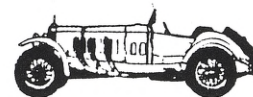
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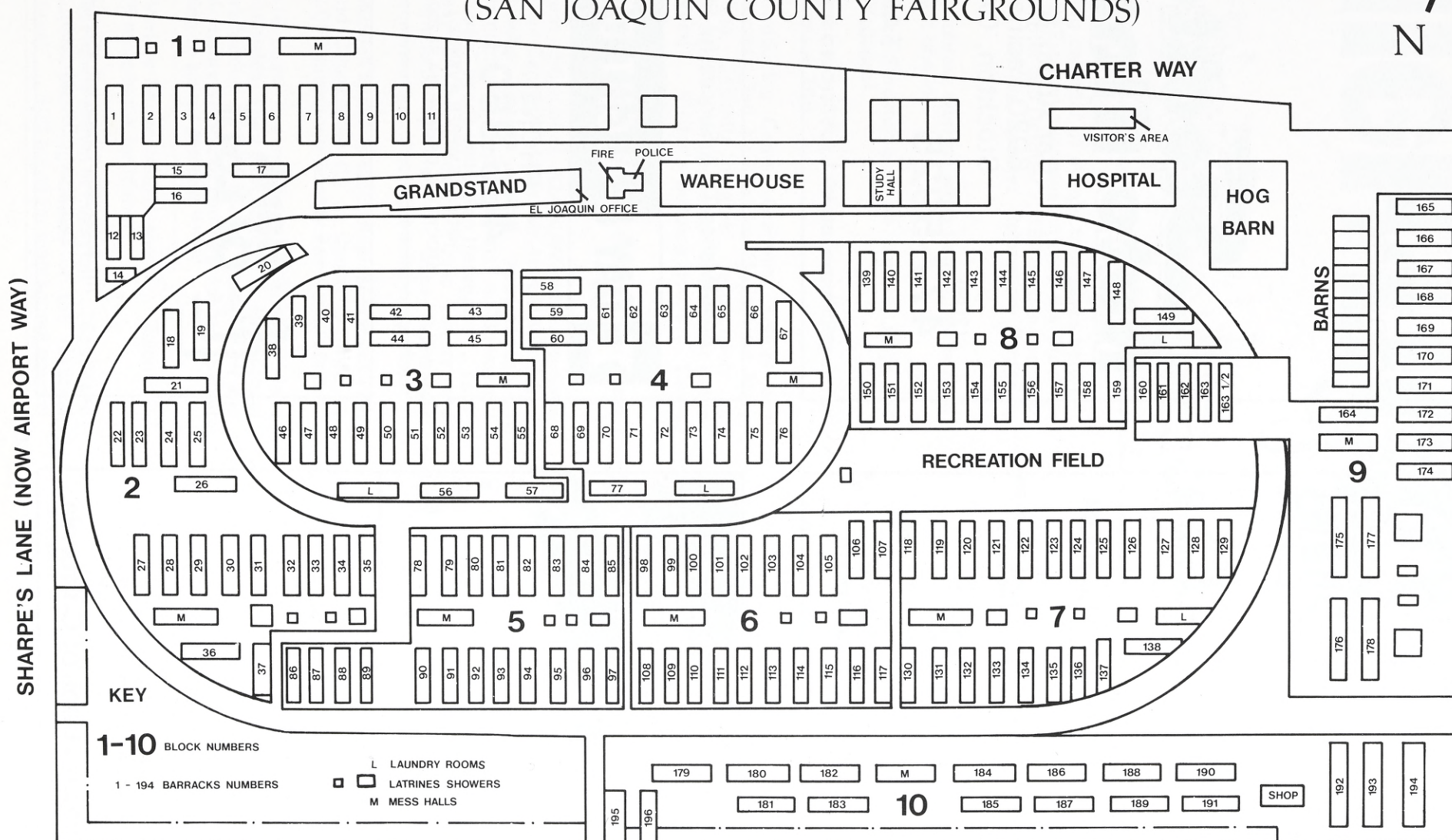
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STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER (SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS)



Map

The Map of the Assembly Center was specially drawn for the special exhibiton held at the Haggin Museum and permission was received for its use in this booklet by Mr. Todd Ruhstaller, Executive Director of Haggin Museum.



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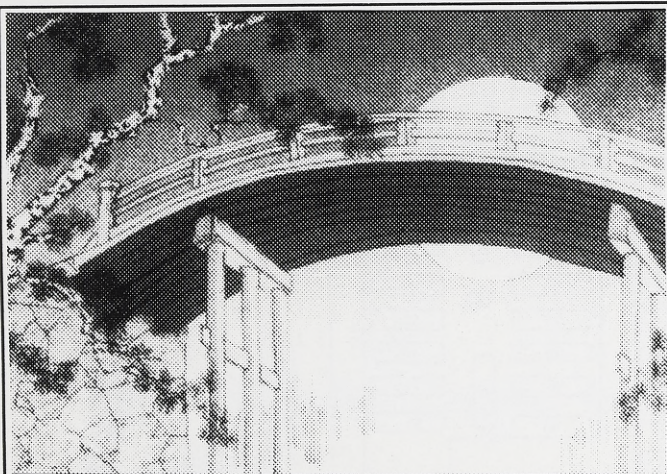


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STOCKTON ASSEMBLY CENTER

Reprint from El Joaquin
Final Edition

The following calendar of events took place between May 10, 1942 when evacuees entered the Stockton Assembly Center and October 7, 1942 when evacuees were moved to the Rowher Relocation Center in Arkansas.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>MAY 10 Volunteer workers enter Center. Nurse Kato, first one in.</p> <p>12 Enter Stocktonians! No fanfare! Bags and baggages!</p> <p>19 Lodians trail in! Late as usual! Population totals 4,268.</p> <p>20 Introducing Center Grammar School and Nursery...led by Toshiko Morita and Mary Hata, Jeanette Iwataki, respectively ... Canteen's grand opening! ... The best in the West! ... Visitor's Building opens ... Come one, come all!</p> <p>MAY 25 Varied Rec. Program starts under Jack McFarland.</p> <p>30 First edition of <i>EL JOAQUIN</i> with caricatures of ex-Center Manager, Mr. Harold Mundell ... Pancho makes initial appearance ... Remember the typhoid shots? ... "Bookworm Haven" opens under Ken Hasegawa ... courtesy of the Stockton Public Library and donations by friends... Miss Humbargar prominent in collecting books, magazines.</p> <p>JUN 2 Mundell appoints Block Representatives (18) and Councilmen (5) ... Center glorified by 5,000 plants via County Fair Association.</p> <p>5 110 sugar beetters leave for Shelley, Idaho beetfields. They beat us to it! ... High school graduation ... Fred Ellis of Stockton Hi and Mr. Leroy Nichols of Lodi Hi present ... Senior fling to honor seniors.</p> <p>6 "Variety Show What a show! ... Talent! ... 25 more leave for Idaho.</p> <p>JUN 8 First movie shown at Edex Hall ... "Sea Island Sugar" and "Big Games of the National Forest" ... 400 enroll for high school course!</p> | <p>10 Pancho from Puddville for President!!</p> <p>15 Wedding chimes heard in S.A.C.... First to tie knots, R. Horibe and Miss Sumi Ito.</p> <p>17 Center shoe repair shop opens for poor leather soles ... Hope of Student Relocation.</p> <p>20 Amateur program from 2 p.m...boxing matches included ... Amateur definitely -- good. 6 a.m. roll call canceled ... 9 p.m. roll call only ... Better be home at 9, Johnny!</p> <p>25 Beginner's Knitting class led by Mrs. S. Sudow begins ... Why?... S.J.C. 'ers receive diplomas at Visitors' Booth ... Mr. Windmiller, registrar presents diplomas.</p> <p>30 Scouts' first Court of Honor... Dr. Mann, Commissioner of the East Side District, chairman...Guest speaker, Jim Cave ... Second call for sugar beet workers. This time Montana.</p> <p>JUL 1 Mess contest series sponsored by L. C. Shaffer... No more messing around!</p> <p>2,3 FIRST PAY CHECKs covering May 10 to June 9 arrive... Over 6,000 dollars distributed... Did you frame yours?</p> <p>JUL 4 All day extravaganza... Special events by scouts, Firecracker Fling... Ice cream, baked ham on menu... also hot dogs and lemonade free.</p> <p>8 Dr. Sasaki and nurses Mary Hashimoto and Chitose Aihara arrive from Parker, Arizona, to join hospital staff.</p> <p>12 Center store cuts prices... reduced average 20%... Yippee!... Mess #3 wins first mess contest... due to cleanliness.</p> <p>14 Mundell leaves Center... Nicholson new Center Manager... Mundell leaves for New Mexico as State Director of Employment for WPA... BYE!</p> |
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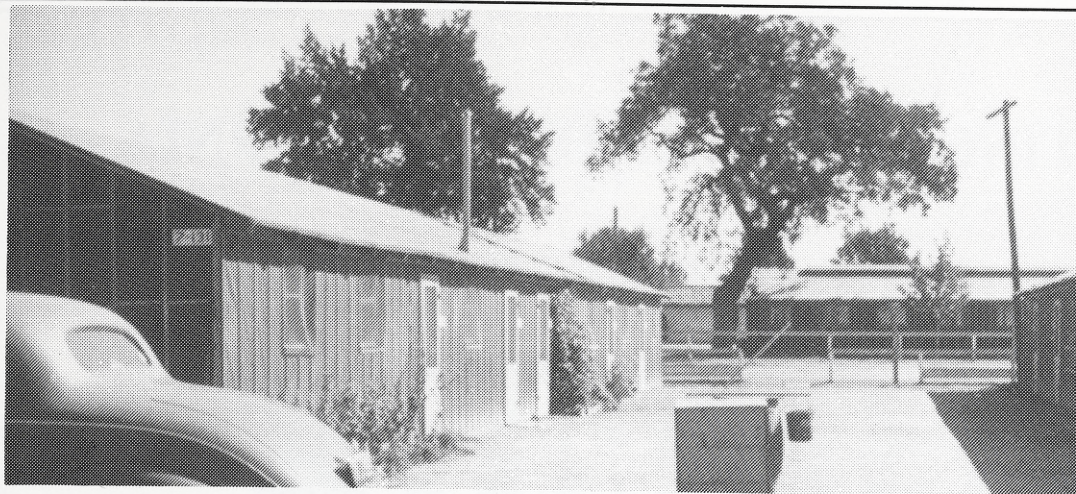
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- 15 First of series to give Center-ites idea of cooperatives appears in EL JOAQUIN... Let's cooperate... O-bon festival... 8-11 p.m.... 500 gyrate to lifting music.
- 18 Talent Revue and what a review!
- JUL 19 Teri weds Kay... candlelight ceremony... Rev. S. Hata ties the knot...
- 20 Coupon books for June and July distributed... At Last!
- 22 Introducing W. Dougherty, Esq. from Marysville Assembly Center... Mess # 3 wins second mess contest... "Don't know how they dooit!"... Shaffer... Social Welfare takes applications for clothing... First Aid classes started by Rec. Dept.
- 23 Registration for voters for primary on August 25.
- 23,24 First sound film, "Tundra"... 8:40 p.m.... June pay checks... \$10,650 distributed... We sure needed them.
- 28-30 Art Exhibit at Edex Hall... under Shima and Mizushima... Surprise talents revealed.
- 27 Barber shop opens... Fred Ito, head barber... shave and a haircut... two bits, I mean 20 cents.
- 29 Sewing classes formed.
- AUG 5 3rd Court of Honor for Scouts... Troop 19 - Field Day winners... Amos A. Stagg speaks.
- 12 August coupon books and first clothing arrive... excitement runs rampant.
- 17 Voters vote!... but turnout small.
- 18 Enter July-Aug. pay checks... What? pay day, again!
- 19 Social Welfare Dept. formed.
- 22-23 All Center Art Exhibits... Education Exhibit... Woodcarving Exhibit
- 22 Speech Exhibit... Good Audience.
- 28 Center Hi School ends... Whoopee!
- 29 Crocheting and Knitting Exhibit... Knit one, purl two... make sense now?... Advisors on council chosen.
- SEP 2 Two students leave!... thru Nat'l Student Reloc. Council... Art Iwata, Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri... Koichi Inouye, Chicago... Special Meal Passes void!... Gosh, we can't eat at Mess #1 anymore.
- 5 Army inspection of barracks... Center holiday.
- 9 Court of Honor... final one... New Asst. Chief of Police, John Ward.
- 8-9 Coupon books... for September... the final splurge begins.
- 10 Montana bound!... Beet workers, Missoula and Lavalli County... 15 more to leave on 15th... Extry! S.A.C. Moves to Rowher, Arkansas... Wuxtry!... Wuxtry!... Read all about it!
- 14 Advance crew leaves... So does co-editor Okura and special correspondent Doi.
- SEP 16 Block Schedule for Relocation released.
- 18 Grammar School and Nursery close... Al Doi leaves for Washington U. in Missouri.
- 19 1st Nisei concert draws 500... Virginia Short presents colorful symphony program.
- 20 Santa Anitans head for Rohwer, Arkansas... Who done it?
- 28 EL JOAQUIN'S final edition to come out... Heck!... that's today... isn't it?
- OCT 3 Block 1 to leave for the Ozark State... So long, California... Well,
- 7 Hello, Arkansas. Where dem thar catfishes!
- p.s. We'll be making mocassins out of those snakes!

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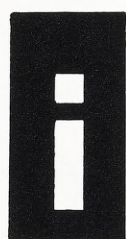
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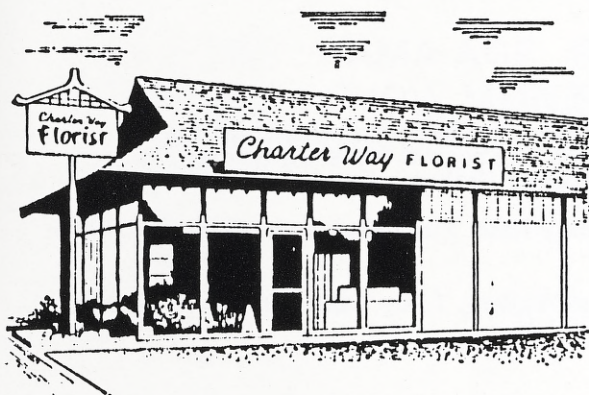
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